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Express Ads

When in S.F., Amtrak President Roger Lewis said Amtrak reads and considers all letters. He also said Amtrak could reinstate Oakland-L.A. overnight trains, as was done New Orleans-Chicago. Please write Roger Lewis asking for this "experimental service."

The California Railway Museum is open weekends. Come ride the streetcars. Also a complete Railroad Book Store. Highway 12, 10 miles east of Fairfield, California.

WANTED: Bound volumes of TRAINS Magazine, nos. 1 to 9, 12 and 13, 16 to 19, and 23 to present. Unbound copies of most issues from Nov. 1951 to present, also 7 loose leaf binders, available in exchange or will sell outright, by year or separately. Send details and SASE to David G. Bigford, 129 Hawthorne, Lake Bluff, IL 60044.

LAST NOTICE! Get in on our FAST MAIL special introductory offer while it still lasts--$1.50 for 12 issues, one year--full of news about AMTRAK, special feature articles and much much more. You save $.50. Offer expires January 1, 1972. Send check to: TWENTIETH CENTURY RAILROAD CLUB, 10700 Seeley, Chicago IL 60643.

TIME IS running out to take advantage of the great dollar savings on Eurailpass! Price increase takes place Jan. 1 (3-wk pass goes up $15, 4-wk $20, etc.). See more details in last issue of RTN. Buy now at old prices if you're going Eurailpassing in any of 13 countries next year. Send remittance to Jean Maxwell, Box 4, c/o RTN, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Current fares: $110 3wks; $140 1mo; $200 2mos; $230 3mos. Ages 4-10 ½-fare. Send age and passport number. Ph. 415-549-0360.

EXPRESS ADS cost just $1.00 (minimum) for up to 3 lines. Extra lines 35¢, 3/$1. Line is 56 spaces. Write: Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, California 94709.

RAIL TRAVEL newsletter

Vol. 1 No. 24
November 15, 1971

ON THE COVER: Amtrak President Roger Lewis talks to rail travelers and reporters after his luncheon address in San Francisco Nov. 19. The quotation shown is from his formal address. See story on p. 3. Photo by Message Media.

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LETTERS

I was distributing Amtrak timetables, the new ones for Nov. 14, in Long Beach City Hall. "Where would I go to catch an Amtrak train?" asked the sweet clerk. Earlier, she had been thrilled at the pictures in the timetable of bedrooms, and that she could bring her pooch aboard in her bedroom.

"At Union Station," I told her where. "Union Station!" she exclaimed. "I just took a bus tour of the Los Angeles Civic Center and they showed us all around. And the guide pointed over there to Union Station. He said, "That's where the trains used to leave from; it's all boarded up now!"

Well, that's the extent of the lack of public information on trains, and I hope we catch up.

Robert J. Swan

Long Beach, Calif.

. . . . . .

WITH THIS ISSUE, RTN completes its first year of publication. Volume 1 will contain 26 issues, however, the last being the issue of Dec. 20. We will begin volume 2 in 1972 and at that time will also give each issue a "whole number" to facilitate reference. That is, the first issue of 1972 will be Whole Number 27.

Effective Dec. 1, back issues of RTN will sell for 25¢ each, no longer 5 for $1.00. The following back issues are no longer available: 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15. Order from Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley, Calif. 94709.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 1, No 24, November 15, 1971. Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. $4.00 a year, 25¢ a copy.

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Richard Tower, Research Editor
Steve Farrar, East Coast Representative
Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large
Michael Cohen, Artist

NEXT ISSUE: Our special first-anniversary issue!

ROGER LEWIS IN SAN FRANCISCO

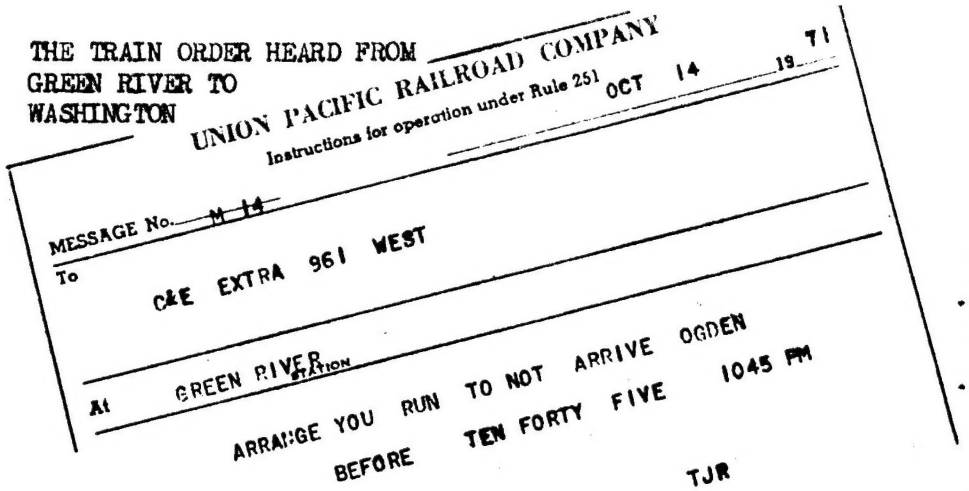
The President of Amtrak gave an address at a $7.25-a-plate luncheon in S.F. Nov. 19, sponsored by San Francisco Planning and Urban Renewal Association (SPUR). The brief return to his native state gave Bay Area rail travelers a rare opportunity to personally see and talk with the man upon whose shoulders rests the fate of American passenger trains.

In a short formal address, Lewis praised BART and said that Amtrak is watching it, since inter-city trains should be coordinated with urban mass transit. Amtrak gets about twice as many complaining letters as positive ones--total about 500 a week--, but that's a "100% improvement" over the past, he grinned. Letters are read carefully, and reveal that travelers don't want a great deal--just good trains with good food, running on time, with polite personnel and easy access to information.

After his talk, the real nitty-gritty began when he was cornered by a group of reporters and rail travelers with specific questions about West Coast service. He was obviously unprepared for some of the questions. "When will you drop the $10 1-way extra fare on the CITY OF S.F.?" He seemed unaware of it. "Where are the diners you advertised for the COAST DAYLIGHT?" He deferred the question to an aide. "When will the private car problem be straightened out?" He promised to look into all such matters.

The overall impression left was generally positive. The questioners sincerely wished him luck, adding that he'll need it. The audience was pleased with his awareness of the need for rail travel to help clear congested highways. Both competition with other travel modes, and cooperation with them, as in pushing travel agents' package tours using a variety of modes, are being sought. Airlines forced Amtrak to give up its advertising that compared planes unfavorably with Metroliners, he said. Amtrak will have its own credit cards, and a national computerized reservation system. He promised to investigate the feasibility of overnight S.F.-L.A. trains and said Amtrak is trying to get more government mail-carrying contracts.

"Well, the Octopus wins again," commented one railfan, as he contemplated the gap between present service and future expectations. But on the whole the visit gave new hope to Westerners that there is a man who sincerely desires to help rail travelers, regardless of the huge obstacles still remaining.



THE TRAIN ORDER HEARD FROM GREEN RIVER TO WASHINGTON

UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY

Instructions for operation under Rule 251

OCT 14 19 71

MESSAGE No. M 14

To C&E EXTRA 961 WEST

At GREEN RIVER STATION

ARRANGE YOU RUN TO NOT ARRIVE OGDEN BEFORE TEN FORTY FIVE 1045 PM

TJR

Two issues ago we remarked that "There's nothing like first-hand observation to get a feeling for what's happening with current passenger service."

The feelings of Anthony Haswell, Chairman of the National Association of Railroad Passengers, were something like fury when he rode the CITY OF S.F. westbound from Omaha to Oakland, arriving Oct. 15. His account of the disastrous journey went out in a letter to Amtrak's Vice Pres. in charge of Operations Nov. 3 and was released to the press Nov. 11.

All three railroads handling the train--BN, UP, and SP--were involved in setting it about 2½ hours behind schedule. According to Haswell, the train left Omaha about on time but during the night lost well over 2 hours because of freights ahead. It was "deliberately sidetracked" at Irondale, Colo., for an eastbound freight, setting it back 20 mins more.

The UP, taking the train over at Denver, made up some time. But then, at 5:22pm at Green River, the train order above was issued, prohibiting #101 from reaching Ogden before 10:45pm. This prevented UP from making up any more time, which it could have done on the train's heavily padded schedule.

SP lost at least a half-hour more, due to engine troubles. There were other problems with the train. The windows were filthy--never washed--by the time the scenic Sierras were reached, the diner ran out of many food items, and passengers reported discourteous treatment by crew members.

Perhaps most galling to Haswell was the fact that UP reported a 100% on-time performance for this train during the period he rode it. The railroad did this because it didn't lose any additional time on its line. In Haswell's scathing letter to Amtrak he stated he is convinced that "the wealthy western railroads are determined to sabotage Amtrak."

AMTRAK'S "AIRLINE" SCHEDULE APPEARS

The new Nov. 14 Amtrak schedule has begun to trickle out to the hinterlands, and train travelers are now adjusting to reading a train timetable unlike any ever produced in America. According to Amtrak, the corporation "composed the new timetable after studying current railroad timetables in the U.S., Canada and Europe, and airline schedules." An airline schedule is what it resembles most. Gone are equipment lists (except for non-Amtrak routes), and substituted are symbols--just 8 of them, instead of the 88 formerly used on all U.S. timetables--to indicate "sit-down food service," "snack," and "first class" service. Equipment lists would indeed be confusing and inaccurate at this time of shifting equipment.

The schedule is a monumental effort, especially considering that Amtrak could spare only one person to work on it. A large number of errors appeared it, but the printer was blamed for not correcting these. A new printing will appear in December with updated holiday schedules and errors corrected. The current edition may prove to be a collector's item, as the printing was limited.

Some criticized Amtrak for not providing enough fanfare with all their new changes, most of which have been mentioned in previous issues of RTN. For example, the L.A.-Boston through sleeper was not given specific mention, and is next to impossible to find in the timetable.

An excellent page of "Train Travel Tips" appears. This much-needed feature explains briefly to travelers how to travel on trains, and pictures types of first-class accommodations. The 72-page schedule has easy-to-read tables. One major caution about misprints: the X and Y symbols are reversed in some of the footnotes (these indicate type of food service). Buffalo-Toronto service via TH&B is now shown, tho the table headings are misprinted.

A sideline note: Amtrak at one point had decided to name the N.Y.-Boston leg of the L.A.-Boston thru service the SUNSHINE SPECIAL, then decided to leave it the SOUTHERN CRESCENT. The former name appears in error at one point in the schedule.

AMTRAK'S PERFORMANCE IS REVEALED

The Interstate Commerce Commission issued Oct. 30 a large report on rail passenger service, evaluating Amtrak's performance since its inception and offering a number of suggestions for improvements. In addition, Amtrak released some of its data for more recent months. These became the basis for hearings before the Senate Commerce Committee. Some of the important data are shown on the next page.

Railroad(s)	End Point Pairs	% On Time	Average Minutes Late
PC	NY-Boston	88.7	34
PC	NY-Washington	86.8	37
PC	NY-Buffalo	59.4	34
PC	NY-Chicago	67.5	42
PC-MP	NY-Kansas City	54.4	63
PC-RF&P-SCL	NY-Miami	49.6	66
PC-RF&P-SCL	NY-Tampa/St. Petersburg	76.4	54
PC-SOU	NY-New Orleans		
PC	Detroit-Chicago	n/a	n/a
C&O	Newport News-Cincinnati	86.6	29
PC	Washington-Chicago	56.5	85
PC	Washington-St. Louis	61.1	48
GM&O	Chicago-St. Louis	60.3	28
PC	Chicago-Cincinnati	63.8	25
PC-L&N-SCL	Chicago-Miami	38.1	66
PC-L&N-SCL	CHICAGO-Tampa/St. Petersburg	48.4	65
IC	Chicago-New Orleans	47.3	54
ATSF	Chicago-Houston	87.2	64
MILW-BN	Chicago-Seattle	61.1	76
BN-UP-SP	Chicago-Oakland	46.6	65
ATSF	Chicago-Los Angeles	58.2	73
SP	New Orleans-Los Angeles	66.4	78
BN-SP-ATSF	Seattle-San Diego	37.4	65

	Revenue % of Expenses
New York-Washington	131
Boston-Washington	99
New York-Philadelphia	89
New Orleans-Los Angeles	76
Chicago-Los Angeles	75
Chicago-Denver	72
Chicago-Seattle	66
New York-Florida	61
Los Angeles-Portland	58
Chicago-Oakland	58
Chicago-New Orleans	54
Chicago-Houston	53
New York-Boston	50
Chicago-New York	49
Chicago-St Louis	36
New York-Albany-Buffalo	29
Chicago-Detroit	29
New York-Springfield	27
Seattle-Portland	25
Chicago-Milwaukee	22
Newport News-Cincinnati	22
Chicago-Florida	21
New York-St Louis	20
San Diego-Los Angeles	14

The table above shows Amtrak on-time performance on basic routes May 1 thru Oct. 14. When trains were late, the average time late is shown. N.Y.-Boston has the best showing (88.7% o.t.) while Seattle-San Diego has the worst (37.4%). ("On time" means no more than 6mins late.)

NARP criticized these figures before the Committee, saying that no less than 95% should be acceptable. No route reached even 90%.

The table at left shows financial results of principal routes (excepting routes under 500 miles that have less than 3 daily runs). Revenue is shown as a percent of expenses; thus any train over 100% is earning money. This was true of the Northeast Corridor only. However, beyond that it is clear that some long-haul routes are not doing badly even tho their dollar loss in absolute terms is high. The SUNSET and the SUPER CHIEF took in (figures are for May and June only) (contd. on p. 11)

KEEPING TRACK

(A regular RTN feature. ...with Paul Rayton Each issue presents a review-critique of a selected pre-Amtrak train.)

Date: March 14, 1971

California's San Joaquin Valley is unique to the United States in several ways, not the least of which being that it was the last place in the country where two carriers operated more or less directly competitive rail passenger service.

Both the Santa Fe and the Southern Pacific ran a passenger train along the length of this massive, fertile valley, the backbone of the California agricultural phenomenon.

The two trains ran virtually parallel routes for over 300 miles. There were some variations in cities served, but here, in truth, was the last place that a prospective traveler could say to himself, "Well, I want to plan my trip on the XX railroad because I prefer their service."

Not that the average rider would, mind you. From what I have seen, the average rider of the 70s lacks the experience or critical judgment necessary to know a good ride from a bad ride, or distinguish between a junky car and a pleasant coach. Many riders (those who were still riding) rode because the train was the only method of transportation they knew, and they weren't inclined to ponder the situation any deeper than necessary. But the taste (good or bad) left in the mouth after a ride could subtly affect future plans.

The "contest" wasn't all that dramatic. Neither carrier lavished any great sums of money promoting their service at the expense of the other's. If ever there were an undeclared war, this was it.

We boarded the southbound Southern Pacific effort, the SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT, at Berkeley on a cold, gray morning. It was a Sunday, and last minute efforts to round up delicatessen sandwiches "to go" had failed, and my wife and I were a bit leery of the forthcoming 12-hour ride to Los Angeles with only one of the SP's notorious vending machine cars to alleviate our midday hunger pangs.

We were right on time as we headed north along San Pablo Bay, on the SP mainline toward Sacramento and the east. A million telephone wires in multi-layered tiers made rhythmic pulses as their wooden poles flashed between us and the bay. Yes, this route started out heading north and east. The SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT made an end run around the north of a portion of the Coast Ranges, at this point little more than rolling hills, but enough to dictate a right-of-way near to the flats of the great bay.

If the tide is out as you travel along here, you see a panorama of tidal estuary action. Mostly there are wide mud flats, with occasional streams crookedly wending their way thru the muck toward the waterline. Gaunt semicircles dot the flatlands: abandoned tires that have been set up on their sides by wave action. Or is it a tombstone for a derelict car, pushed into the bay by unthinking, uncaring individuals?

At Martinez we leave the main eastbound track and, after running along the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers for a spell, start heading away from the water's edge. We're heading for Tracy, and a connection with the SACRAMENTO DAYLIGHT, another vestigial train providing "through" service from Sacramento.

It was still rather early, and, in need of something hot to perk us up, we headed, against our better judgment, for the Automat. Reams have been written about the food service provided therein. (See Paul Rayton's COAST DAYLIGHT article in RTN #12) Today was no exception. I'll not dwell on that aspect of the train; the less said the better. I was slightly intrigued by the car itself, though.

The SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT had the dubious distinction of being the first train on which the SP sprung

this machine food service. The initial appearance was hailed in the Oct. '61 "SP Bulletin" as, "Passengers Enjoy SP's New 'Automats.'"

In these automats, most traces of their former sleeping car existence had been obliterated. Tables and chairs lined either side of a central aisle, not unlike a real dining car. In this car, though, when you entered you made a zigzag and followed the old side corridor toward the center of the car, where the coin machines were located. As you approached the machines you passed on your left three former double bedrooms, innards all ripped out and huge gaping holes in the walls which once separated the rooms. I guessed the holes were to avoid claustrophobic reactions—and to give you something to look at other than a plain beige wall. Beyond the machines, the former "sections" of this car had been replaced with seats and tables—but the old walls dividing the sections still were there.

On a wall an 8x10 glossy, colored picture labeled "Hot Turkey Sandwich, with gravy" made a half-hearted attempt to set the mood for eating. It was the car's sole decoration.

Coffee and tea were as expected...

Arrival at Tracy was on time. We had several minutes at that stop, so I hopped out into a light drizzle and ran around frantically looking for either a snack bar or a newspaper machine. Neither was available.

NEWS AGENT

The News Agent on the *Daylight* is an S.P. employe. He is interested in serving you and making your trip a pleasant one. During the day he will pass through the train offering box candies, Cactus Candy, Aplets and Cotlets, fig bars, cigarettes, stamps and magazines for sale.

Still on time, we left Tracy and headed out more toward the central portions of the gigantic valley.

During the Tracy stop I had observed that two of our 3 coaches were remnants of SP's railroading experiments: articulated cars. They were treated like two individual cars (nos. 2463 & 2464), but they were joined permanently in the middle over a single, common truck. The Conductor said they had been built about 1941.

There was one other coach too. The Conductor dated it at about 1937. It looked all right, considering. It wasn't as timeworn as a car from the east would have been. It had green seats and beige walls. All the cars had plain linoleum flooring and clean windows.

Modesto. From this point until we reached Bakersfield, we would be traveling a 200 mile route through the heart of the San Joaquin Valley. The SP trackage in this area is built hard alongside the main road of the San Joaquin Valley, highway 99. Trucks, cars, buses, farm vehicles, one and all roar up and down on highway 99. The pulse of commerce is in the air; people are going places.

Aboard the train this Sunday about 35 passengers were going places. The load varied from station to station, of course, and there were only about 5 people making the full trip from the San Francisco area to Los Angeles.

The ride was slow. We seldom got over 60mph, tho there were a couple of occasions when for a short stretch we made it up to 70. The roadbed felt quite smooth. It was almost embarrassing to be in the train. We could watch out the window as traffic of all sorts moved along the highway faster than we. And particularly galling to those of us who believe in trains and know that we could be doing 80 mph with ease, or even 90.

All around us were walnut groves, trees all abloom. And lush fields of other crops were beginning to bud developing the fresh rich green characteristic of new vegetation.

The massive scope of agriculture was awe-inspiring. The towns thru the valley sort of reflected the farming influence, tempered with the strong Spanish heritage of the entire state. The towns were simply grownup farming villages. The buildings were bigger but the feel (and smell) were the same. The land was dry and dusty in every town. The summer heat later would be really fierce.

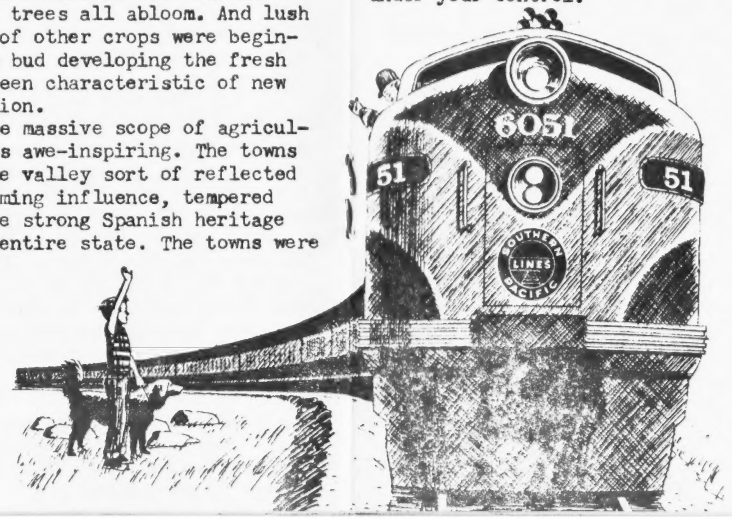
We were right on time (2:48pm) when we arrived in Bakersfield. Here the population of the train increased markedly as another 15 persons boarded for the 5-hour ride over the Tehachapi Mountains to Los Angeles.

Out from Bakersfield and before you know it, the train almost imperceptibly begins its slow climb up 3500 ft to Tehachapi pass.

We came nearer and nearer the angular hills, resplendent in fresh spring verdure. The air outside the doors smelled of total refreshment. Soon the track ran out of straight running and had to begin curving to allow the favorable grades for mountain climbing.

There was almost a traffic jam on the grade. There were freight trains in almost every siding, it seemed, some climbing, some descending. Both Santa Fe and SP share this trackage over the pass, and there is considerable tonnage making the mountainous trip. Sometimes there were three tracks, sometimes just one.

This route has the famous "loop" wherein the tracks go in a very sharp curve around a small hill and cross over themselves. We met a very long freight waiting for us at the loop, its cars stacked back around and over the bridge. It must be very dramatic to be the engineer and see the whole loop of cars moving in that circle under your control.



Lacking any semblance of a lounge car, my wife and I sat in the old section area of the sleeper—whoops! Automat—and, in deference to the spartan surroundings, tried to liven things up with screwdrivers. It wasn't a luxury ride, but everything had been going beautifully.

Too beautifully. At 4:10pm, still on the upgrade and out in the middle of nowhere, we ground to a stop. We sat there for 20 minutes, and I thought we were waiting for a freight coming down off the hill. Conductor, Brakeman and Engineer carried on an anxious discussion up by the engine.

No train arrived, but we started moving again. This time for only 10 minutes. Then it was time for another 5min stop. Still no apparent reason; no freights in sight. We started out again, moved slowly for 5 painful minutes, then groaned to a halt. By now it was abundantly clear that something was wrong in the engine.

I inquired of the Conductor the nature of the problem: "A traction motor has overheated" was the reply. The engine must have been sick or neglected in the shops. It was a 3600hp SDP45. If it couldn't even move itself, a baggage car, and 4 passenger cars without breaking down, it couldn't be very well maintained.

Fortunately for us extraordinary good luck was on our side. There was a freight coming down the hill, so the crews worked out a scheme whereby one engine off the downhill freight would be used to rescue pore ol' #52.

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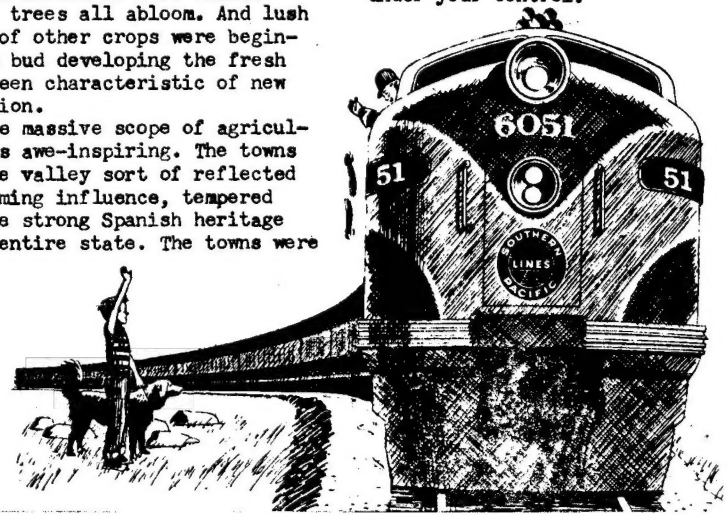

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When we got into motion again, we were 50 minutes late. It could have been much worse; but the hour

was becoming late and hunger was beginning to overtake us. I could see our plans of a post-arrival dinner in a Los Angeles restaurant fading into the sunset--as we were forced to snack on peanuts and stale crackers, à la automat.

After the small towns on the edge of the Mojave Desert (Mojave, Palmdale), there was yet one more range of mountains between us and Mecca. We slipped thru the San Gabriel Mountains via Soledad Pass, closer than we desired to the epicenter of our Feb. 9 earthquake.

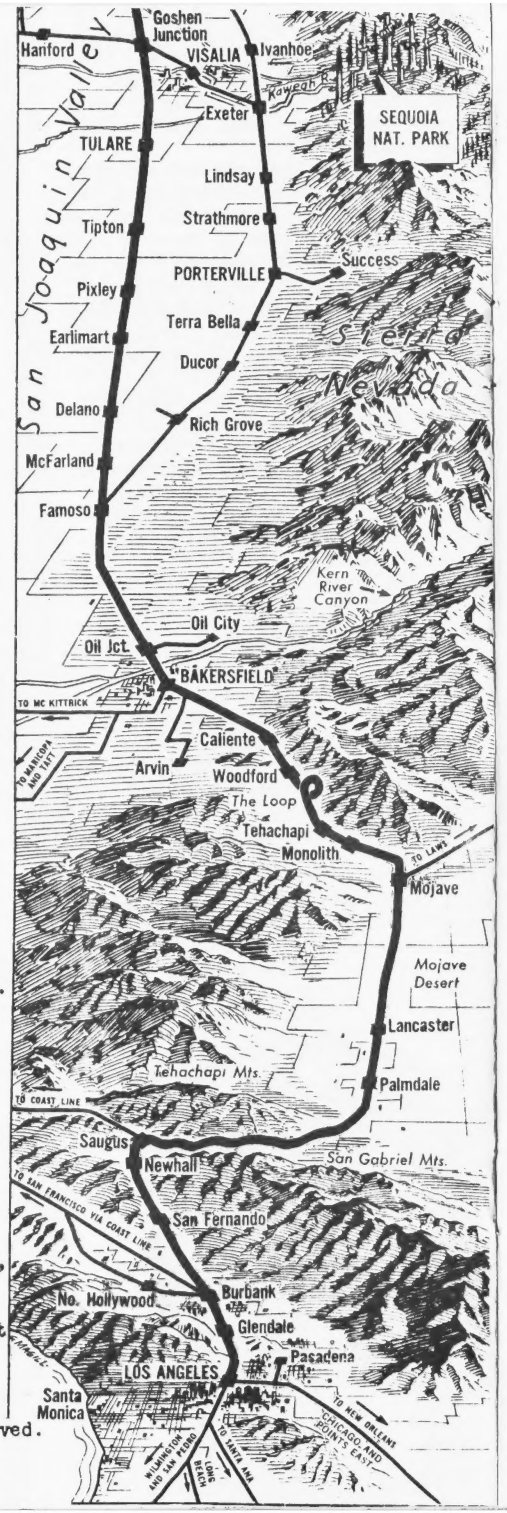
One sight I'll never forget that evening as we descended along the floor of the pass: from backyards near the tracks people were waving to us. Not unusual in itself, but also several houses were actually flashing their lights in a salutation to our train. I wondered what prompted all this enthusiasm from the residents of the area. And I wished those people would use and ride the train, rather than just wave at it. Soon they would have nothing but freights at which to wave.

As it was, many of the passengers this day were SP families traveling free anyway.

How it happened, nobody knows, but between our engine incident and arrival in L.A. we managed to lose another 40 minutes. By now we had a whole trainload of people who were anxious to get to their destination. When we stopped at the Los Angeles terminal at 9:20pm, we were 1½ hours late. One lady was both furious and frantic at the same time. She had now missed her connection to the Santa Fe eastbound train and would have to stay overnight in Los Angeles--at her own expense, of course. "Next time, I'm going to take a bus!" she loudly announced.

I asked a Brakeman about the time loss: "They delayed us a little more every place else" he replied.

The SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT may not have been SP's most abused train, but it was certainly a leading contender. With service as unreliable as that we had witnessed, it wouldn't take long to alienate any potential market.



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ALL THE WAY BY TRAIN

— between San Francisco and Los Angeles via San Joaquin Valley

Paul Rayton's article on the preceding pages comes at an appropriate time. Senators Alan Cranston and John Tunney of California are jointly sponsoring a bill to restore train service to the San Joaquin Valley. It would run from Oakland to Barstow, or alternatively from Sacramento to Barstow. The bill, no. S-2341, is now pending a hearing before the Senate Commerce Committee.

Thru service on the SP Valley line from Oakland to L.A. began in 1876. An all-daytime schedule came Mar. 20, 1927, with the inauguration of the SAN JOAQUIN FLYER. That plush train was the immediate predecessor of the DAYLIGHT.

S·P

July 4, 1941 the train got streamlined equipment and was heavily promoted in an "All the Way by Train" campaign to counter competition from the popular, streamlined Santa Fe GOLDEN GATE rail-bus service. The SACRAMENTO DAYLIGHT began running as thru cars June 2, 1946. In 1955 a dome lounge was added to the DAYLIGHT, and it ran thru 1967.

It was the last SP streamliner to give up its distinctive "General Service" steam locomotive to the diesel (Sept. 14, 1956).

In the late sixties SP tried several times to discontinue the San Joaquin and Sacramento DAYLIGHTS, or failing that, to abandon service on the mountainous Bakersfield-Los Angeles district and transfer passengers to a Santa Fe bus. But it took the advent of Amtrak, and the omission of the valley line from the basic system, to retire 51 and 52 at last.

(RTN #8, now out of print, contains an article by George Hyko on travel to and from Yosemite National Park on the SAN JOAQUIN DAYLIGHT. RTN #11 shows a photo of the last train run April 30, 1971.)

(contd. from p. 6) AMTRAK PERFORMANCE

about 3/4 of their expenses. With this kind of performance there would seem to be good reason to believe that increased ridership along with increased efficiency of operation could put such trains in the black. Since essentially no advertising was done during the period in question, it raises the question of whether strong promotional campaigns could increase ridership substantially.

East Coast Report by Steve Farrar

NOVEMBER 14 found us at Washington Union Station to observe Amtrak's improved Northeast Corridor service and new equipment assignments. We had an excellent trip up from Richmond on the SILVER STAR, which now has an excessive layover (50" instead of 20") in Washington. PC coaches were added to the rear. The train was so long that the GG1 needed the assistance of a Washington Terminal switcher to get out of WUT's lower level. Standard procedure is to uncouple the switcher on the fly, but the whole train had to stop this time—reason unknown.

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON was 1'15" late arriving for its first thru run to Boston, so a PC train labeled as the GEORGE left Washington 2pm, with the thru Chicago-Boston cars being forwarded in the new SENATOR schedule at 3pm. The consist of C&O 50 was: B&O E unit, SCL coach (Charlottesville-Boston; carpeted--very rare), UP leg-rest coach, C&O diner, UP sleeper (all Chicago-Boston), PC heavyweight baggage (Chicago-Washington—last run). About 30 passengers went thru, most of them in the UP coach. Even the C&O coach porter worked thru Hinton-Baltimore, so he could clean the coaches coming down from Boston on #51. A GG1, 8 PC coaches, snack coach and parlor were added to the head end as a giant crowd descended for the first run of a late-afternoon Boston train. The PC conductor successfully prevented anyone from boarding the empty carpeted SCL coach and the half-empty UP one, forcing everyone to board the PC junk. We noted that Southern #8 now carries only an F unit and a heavyweight coach into Washington, with checked baggage now being handled in new shelves in the coach. Three or more units are now dropped in Alexandria along with the freight cars. About 30 riders detrained, altho some days no one does.

THE NEW CONNECTICUT YANKEE left for Springfield, Mass., with a good crowd aboard for the first run--about 225 people in 6 cars--including an ancient red PRR heavyweight P70.

THE JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY came in on time, but the consist was arranged backwards. The Boston-Charlottesville coach (again, SCL) was behind the engine instead of on the rear. The UP sleeper porter reported that he had had 19 seat patrons, but only 1 thru sleeper passenger.

THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT had a New York Central diner from Boston to Washington, where Southern originated a diner for Atlanta. We're glad to see the establishment of dining service north of Washington, but we would hope that Amtrak and Southern can run thru diners, because the diners are changed out during mealtimes in both directions. And pity the New Orleans passenger, because the diners are again changed at Atlanta—at mealtimes—in both directions.

B&O's "Harley Staggers Special" came in on time with a B&O coach and 2 C&O coaches. A news butch substituted for the C&O diner-coach, which had mechanical trouble.

THE SILVER METEOR made the first run in its 30-year history without its famed round-end observation. There appeared to be a definite increase in business for the corridor trains, primarily because of improved service to New England and the opening of Metropark, N.J. However, there was absolutely no fanfare, and not a single Amtrak rep was observed at the station the whole afternoon.

C&O/B&O President Watkins officially dropped "Sleep Like a Kitten" slogan in October—academic anyway.....GN dome coaches began running Newport News-Chicago about Nov.16; at least one green-and-orange car and at least 2 Big Sky Blue cars are being used. N&W domes which were to run originally are apparently still unserviceable.....The eastbound GEO. WASHINGTON has been 1 to 2 hours late almost daily since late October because of bad track and track repair on PC. Geeps are used very often between Charlottesville & Newport News instead of E units. Amtrak is paying for taxicab service Newport News to Norfolk every day that #98 is so late that the bus has to go to Norfolk empty to pick up passengers for #99.....Amtrak got a black eye in the press in Richmond when RF&P and Miller & Rhoads dept. store learned that Amtrak would not or could not supply coaches for the 19th annual Santa Claus Train. Ten thousand adults & kids rode the 8 runs of the 1970 train between Richmond and Doswell. Several trips also ran using the same coaches, but originating in Alexandria and Fredericksburg. The mystery is that a complete train is in Richmond for use on specials to the Washington Redskins games on Dec.5 and 19. This train has run sold out for every Washington Redskins home game in 1971 and for years previous, with the cars being used for Santa Claus trains on non-game days. We understand, tho, that even the profitable football specials may be cancelled (and buses substituted) if Amtrak decides to move the RF&P coaches away from Richmond..... Those football specials, incidentally, are the wackiest things on wheels at 70mph. The crowd drinks all the way up to D.C. Sunday morning, drinks all day at the game, and drinks all the way home; with the result that the return trip often features a pull on the emergency cord by a passenger, and/or fistfights in the aisles.....

Auto-Train's Lorton, VA terminal apparently will be somewhat makeshift in the beginning. An old track leading to the Lorton Reformatory is being re-ballasted, and land is being cleared. A portable auto ramp has arrived on a flatcar. But no building construction was in evidence Nov. 6.....

The city of Charleston, WV, rented a B&O Budd car (9912) on Nov.11 and 12 to test the feasibility of rail rapid transit. The car made 2 trips east from Charleston on the C&O main line to Montgomery and Scott Depot; made 2 trips on C&O's Cabin Creek branch. C&O/B&O charged the city $2400 for the 4 trips. A 2-man crew was used. The car reportedly is regularly used in Pittsburgh commuter service; was deadheaded east on C&O #2 Nov.13 .....The ILLINOIS ZEPHYR, in addition to daily service, will offer a 3:15pm eastward departure from West Quincy on days prior to major holidays.....Metropark, N.J. station was dedicated Nov. 11 by Volpe. Station cost was paid by New Jersey, FRA and FHA.....DOT was reported happy over use of the Metropark station, Capital Beltway and the New Haven Metroliner on first weekday of operation (Nov.15).

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

BART Threatened by Free Bridge Tolls?

The California Toll Bridge Authority plans to allow cars carrying 3 or more persons to cross the S.F.-Oakland Bay Bridge free westbound starting Dec. 8. The plan would be in effect only during morning rush hour, and the cars would have 2 reserved lanes thru the toll plaza, sharing one now used by buses for part of the distance. State Senator James Mills is challenging the idea, claiming it may discourage commuters from using BART when it is completed.

GOVERNOR ROCKEFELLER acknowledges that the controversial Hudson River Expressway is dead. Environmentalists are pleased over this fact, an outcome of the Nov.2 voter defeat of a $2.5 billion transportation bond issue in N.Y. PENN CENTRAL'S Harlem & Hudson commuter divisions are to be taken over by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority. However, a Federal judge has temporarily blocked the transaction.

Mixed Train of Thoughts

BIGGEST TOPIC of concern among West Coast train riders the past two weeks: when would the diners appear on the COAST DAYLIGHT? Amtrak advertised them early in November (see last issue) but the Automat car (and no lounge) continued. Here's what happened: 3 L&N lunch counter-lounge cars arrived in Oakland Nov. 12, 2 days before the scheduled changeover. They were found in bad condition--missing stove, carpet holes, bad trucks, broken windows--and SP wouldn't run them. So back they went Nov. 22 while on the same day an SP hamburger-grille car went on the DAYLIGHT at Oakland to replace the coin-ops. The grille cars are from the old GOLDEN STATE, and have been used lately on excursion trains... THE LOUNGE is currently gone from the COAST STARLIGHT, being sent east with no replacement yet. First run of the STARLIGHT on new schedule saw it 1½ hrs late into L.A. To make the connection with the SUPER CHIEF, passengers were detrained at Glendale to be bused to Pasadena. But in their haste to amend errors, SP personnel shouted at detraining riders to "Step lively!", whereupon a middle-aged lady tripped on a rail and fell flat on her face. Outcome unknown... SECOND SOUTHBOUND STARLIGHT (Nov. 16) was seen at San Luis Obispo already 1 hr late, maintaining its record as the worst timekeeper in Amtrak's system... SAN FRANCISCO Examiner, never a supporter of passenger trains, ran an off-base editorial Nov. 21 in which it called the Sunset Route "little-used." The paper should do its homework next time; the route is Amtrak's closest-to-profitable long-haul run... RIO GRANDE definitely will not alter its schedules (of the RGZ) to match up with Amtrak's new times. The DZ into Denver misses the Rio Grande by 2 hrs. However, a bonus for Western travelers: you can now travel roundtrip to Denver thru scenic Colorado without layover... READING RR officially went bankrupt Nov. 23... AMTRAK got ICC permission this month to dip into its $100 million in guaranteed funds. It will issue notes maturing Dec. 31, 1973... FARE CUT to maximum of $9.90 N.Y.-Boston (on non-Metroliner trains) instead of up to $12.75 is now in effect to stimulate corridor train travel...

ROGER LEWIS in S.F. made a good point about RR investment in the past: most of it went into maintaining an antiquated plant and for taxes, so only a few billion over the years were ever really visible in new equipment, etc.... AMTRAK'S latest ad (Time Mag. 11/29 & others) shows hand squeezing 2 RR cars, another fondling a Santa Fe dome--to indicate Amtrak rejected 2/3 of available cars... AFTER READING Paul Rayton's SUNSET article last issue, a railfan asked Roger Lewis if Amtrak will cater to special ethnic food needs of minority groups, and he called it a good idea he hadn't thought of...

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"In make-or-break areas of service quality, on-time performance and costs, the new Amtrak passenger train system is still largely at the mercy of the individual railroads that continue to handle direct operations."

--Christopher Lydon, N.Y. Times, Nov. 21

"On the basis of my trip (Omaha-Oakland), and of the 'on-time' performance information submitted to the Senate Commerce Committee, I am convinced that the wealthy western railroads are determined to sabotage Amtrak. I would like to know what Amtrak intends to do about it."

--NARP Chairman Anthony Haswell, in letter to Amtrak, Nov. 3

EDITORIAL

A very important idea has emerged in a modest editorial in the Oakland Tribune, which we quoted in the last issue. The Tribune, conservative in tone and disinclined to support government subsidies, nevertheless came out strongly in favor of granting Amtrak the additional money it needs to "build up a head of steam."

The most important point came in the following text, however: "For in this age of growing concern for the quality of the lives we live and for the importance of the simple amenities of that existence, many Americans should be able to find true pleasure in riding passenger trains. But the service must be satisfactory, and that is going to require some time and some money."

We salute the Tribune for bringing out this fact. Some "simple" things in life are extremely important. Some are natural, like clean air and pure water. Others are technological developments that seem irreplaceable--like clothes, boats, and trains. We must have them, one way or another. But we came--and still may be in danger of coming--absurdly close to being without passenger trains altogether. Amtrak is all that stands between us and rail oblivion. Let's give the corporation all our support, and write our Congressmen about it now. And remember that criticism is not necessarily lack of support--it means we care what Amtrak is doing.

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